United Nations S/2018/919

Security Council

Distr.: General
15 October 2018

Original: English

Report of the Secretary-General on his mission of good offices in Cyprus

I. Introduction

1. The Security Council, in its resolution 2430 (2018), requested me to submit a report by 15 October 2018 on my good offices and the outcome of the consultations being conducted by a senior United Nations official, Jane Holl Lute, on my behalf. In the resolution, the Council noted the lack of progress towards a settlement since the conclusion of the Conference on Cyprus in July 2017 and urged the sides and all involved participants to seize the important opportunity presented by the consultations with regard to a possible way forward. The Council also called upon the sides, the leaders of the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities, and all involved parties to actively engage with openness and creativity and to fully commit to a settlement process under United Nations auspices. The Council also expressed its full support for my good offices to remain available to assist the sides, should they jointly decide to re-engage in negotiations with the necessary political will.

2. The present report is focused on developments from 21 May 2018 to 5 October 2018, providing an update on the activities carried out by the good offices mission under the leadership of my Deputy Special Adviser on Cyprus, Elizabeth Spehar. As requested, it further informs the Council on the outcome of the consultations conducted on my behalf by Ms. Lute.

II. Background

3. I noted in my previous report on progress towards a settlement (S/2018/610) that, 10 months after the closing of the Conference on Cyprus, no further progress had been made towards a settlement. I observed that the political stalemate had further lowered expectations on the island, despite important advances registered during the most recent round of talks, and contributed to diminished trust between the leaders and their respective communities and among the parties overall. I further noted with concern the continued absence of dialogue and the uncertain prospects for the future, while also acknowledging that there was still scope for the sides to act decisively to chart a common way forward. In the report, I conveyed my intention to send a senior United Nations official to conduct in-depth consultations with the parties.

4. In the current reporting period, several controversies related to intercommunal relations arose, serving as a stark reminder of the ongoing divide. These included the reaction by some political actors in the Greek Cypriot community to musicians

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employed by the Cyprus Symphony Orchestra intending to play at a festival in the north (the musicians ultimately refrained from participating) as well as the protests by civil society activists on both sides of the divide against the decision of local Turkish Cypriot authorities to open a beach in the Famagusta area only to Turkish Cypriots and Turkish nationals. Furthermore, a group of 238 Greek Cypriot journalists signed a letter of protest against a bicommunal glossary of sensitive words and phrases for voluntary consideration by journalists from both communities that had been launched on 10 July by the Representative on Freedom of the Media of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the aim of which was "to encourage sensitive communications, to promote the sharing of stories and experiences, and, eventually, to help ease tensions".

5. One widely observed phenomenon, however, which indicated growing contacts between the two communities, at least those of a transactional nature, was an increase in the number of crossings between the two sides of the island. There was reportedly a significant increase in the number of Greek Cypriots crossing to the north from January to August, as compared with the same period last year. In August alone, the number of Greek Cypriots crossing to the north almost doubled compared with the number of people crossing during the month of January 2018, likely due to economic reasons. Greek Cypriot purchases in the north were up 32 per cent while those of Turkish Cypriots in the south were down 22 per cent. These have also been a concrete reminder of the possible economic benefits that would stem from a comprehensive settlement.

6. The period under review has seen fewer tensions surrounding the exploitation of hydrocarbon reserves off the coast of Cyprus. New rounds of exploratory drilling scheduled for the last quarter of 2018 could however result in renewed tensions and significantly complicate prospects for dialogue between the parties.

III. Status of the process

7. Following the closing of the Conference on Cyprus in Crans-Montana, Switzerland, on 7 July 2017, I had called upon the parties to reflect on the way forward. In early July 2018, I asked Ms. Lute, as a senior United Nations official, to consult with the parties to the Conference to seek the outcomes of their reflection since the Conference and to help determine whether the necessary conditions were in place for a meaningful process. I stressed that she should underline that the United Nations remained available to support the sides and that the interests of all Cypriots would remain at the core of the efforts of the United Nations on the island. Through these consultations, I asked that she try to understand whether the parties are ready to undertake the effort necessary to achieve a concrete resolution of the Cyprus issue.

8. Prior to the launch of the consultations, my Deputy Special Adviser met with both leaders, who expressed satisfaction with the upcoming consultations and reiterated their readiness to engage with Ms. Lute in discussions on a possible way forward. In his public statements, the Greek Cypriot leader, Nicos Anastasiades, welcomed the consultations. He stated his readiness to resume talks from where they had left off in Crans-Montana in July 2017 and expressed the hope that the consultations would serve as a catalyst towards a resumption of negotiations. Likewise, in his public remarks, the Turkish Cypriot leader, Mustafa Akıncı, also welcomed the consultations and underscored that they should not be considered as a resumption of the talks. He reconfirmed his readiness to work towards a settlement, while underscoring that the Turkish Cypriot side would not be part of an endless negotiation process.

9. At the same time, public expectations regarding the consultations appeared contained in both communities, as popular opinion in Cyprus since the Conference generally reflected either apathy or discouragement with respect to a return to talks. Appeals to the leaders or calls for the United Nations to take the initiative towards the resumption of talks were, however, sporadically heard, voiced primarily by bicommunal civil society groups. On 1 September, for example, the Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot trade unions issued a joint statement calling on the leaders to engage in a determined manner in renewed negotiations to achieve a settlement that would serve the interests of all Cypriots. Similarly, on 26 September, those Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot political parties which regularly meet under the auspices of the Embassy of Slovakia in Cyprus issued a joint communiqué welcoming the attempt by the Secretary-General to explore options through consultations, while strongly urging the leaders to "work hard for the resumption of the talks on the basis of the framework and procedures proposed by the Secretary-General, towards attaining a federal solution and reunification of the island".

10. During the reporting period, my Deputy Special Adviser on Cyprus and the good offices team continued their outreach to a range of stakeholders, seeking the views of political parties, civil society groups, business people and analysts on both sides on the current situation on the island and encouraging their involvement in building a constituency for peace.

11. On 23 July, Ms. Lute travelled to Cyprus to meet separately with Mr. Anastasiades and Mr. Akıncı. Ms. Lute later visited the capitals of the three guarantor powers, Turkey, Greece and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, for similar consultations. She met with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkey on 30 July 2018, with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Greece on 11 September 2018 and with the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs and the Minister of State for Europe and the Americas of the United Kingdom on 12 September 2018. Ms. Lute also met with the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice President of the European Commission on 13 September 2018. It is to be recalled that the European Union had attended the Conference on Cyprus as an observer.

12. I met with Mr. Anastasiades and Mr. Akıncı bilaterally in New York on 28 September 2018 to hear their views on how they saw the way forward, following Ms. Lute's consultations. I reiterated the commitment of the United Nations to Cyprus and the continued availability of my good offices.

13. These efforts, in line with the calls of the Security Council, underscore the firm commitment of the United Nations to supporting the leaders in efforts to reach a comprehensive settlement should they jointly decide to re-engage in results-oriented negotiations.

IV. Status of the process: other features

14. In its most recent resolution on Cyprus (resolution 2430 (2018)), the Security Council called for renewed efforts to implement all remaining confidence-building measures and for agreement on and implementation of further joint and unilateral steps to build trust between the communities. The Security Council furthermore called upon the two leaders to intensify the work with the technical committees established in 2008, with the aim of improving the daily lives of Cypriots.

15. During the reporting period, there was little movement on new trust-building or confidence-building measures, while the implementation of outstanding agreed confidence-building measures previously agreed by the two leaders made scant

progress. As noted in my previous report (S/2018/610), the leaders had renewed their focus on the work at two additional crossing points, as announced in 2015 and taken up by the Technical Committee on Crossings, with the intention of opening them promptly. Some, but not all, of the necessary public works at both crossings were completed during this period. However, despite these efforts, and notwithstanding the work by the United Nations Development Programme to support technical preparations, as well as the continued efforts by the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) to find solutions to issues and concerns raised by both sides, regrettably the two crossing points have yet to be opened.

16. To date, there continues to be no significant change in the operation of the technical committees. Some of these bicommunal bodies, such as the Technical Committee on Cultural Heritage, the Joint Communications Room, which is linked to the Technical Committee on Crime and Criminal Matters, and the Technical Committee on Education, continue to meet regularly and work on important bicommunal initiatives. Others meet only sporadically. Out of 12 technical committees, 7 have not met in over a year, and one of those has not met since autumn 2016.

17. During the reporting period, the Imagine project, which is aimed at increasing connections between schoolchildren from both communities through peace education and contact, continued its activities. The project was developed by the bicommunal Association for Historical Dialogue and Research under the auspices of the Technical Committee on Education and enjoys support from the Embassy of Germany. The Technical Committee on Education met twice to lend its support to the implementation of the project, which received additional funding from the Embassy of Germany to expand the scope of its work and promote activities across the divide and not only in the buffer zone as has been the case to date. In a recent development the Turkish Cypriot authorities reportedly announced that more Greek language teachers would be brought into the school system.

18. On 4 July, the Cyprus Women's Lobby organized a meeting with a group of women peacebuilders from across the island, with the support of the Mediterranean Women Mediators Network, the Women Mediators Network across the Commonwealth, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom and UNFICYP. The event brought women from across the island together, in order to reflect and build on efforts by women activists to strengthen the involvement of women in the peace process. Follow-up activities are planned for autumn 2018, with an emphasis on securing a broader base of women island-wide for involvement in this forum.

19. From 22 to 26 September, co-founders of the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition participated in a series of events on the island to share experiences and discuss the role of women's engagement in the Good Friday Agreement and within peace processes more broadly, and to share lessons that could strengthen the inclusion of women's perspectives in the peace process in Cyprus. The programme was hosted and facilitated by the PRIO Cyprus Centre and the Embassy of Ireland in Cyprus, in partnership with UNFICYP and my good offices mission, and involved public events in different locations across the island, as well as more focused meetings with women activists, politicians, academics, university students and gender practitioners. During the meetings, there was discussion on issues ranging from outreach and community mobilization, as well as how to support the inclusion of civil society more broadly in the peace process. Importantly, following several months of inactivity, several members of the Technical Committee on Gender Equality met on 23 September during a meeting held in the context of the visit of the co-founders of the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition. Among other issues, methods to draw a gender perspective most effectively into any future resumption of talks were discussed.

20. Further to the call by the Security Council, my good offices mission and UNFICYP have held several discussions with civil society representatives, as well as economic and gender experts who have expressed interest in formulating a plan of action to conduct a gender-sensitive socioeconomic impact assessment.

21. During the summer period, intercommunal activities remained limited; however, both my good offices mission and UNFICYP pursued efforts to facilitate intercommunal contacts and cooperation and encouraged civil society to contribute to building a constituency for peace on the island. For example, on 6 July 2018, the missions co-hosted an informal meeting, which included representatives of civil society, the international community and the United Nations, to network and exchange views on how to further encourage and support intercommunal contacts. Such efforts have assisted in identifying additional assistance for future civil society initiatives to promote peace and reconciliation.

V. Observations and conclusions

22. Ten years after their initial establishment, the bicommunal technical committees continue to operate, albeit with little momentum. Overall, the stated commitment of the leaders to revitalizing these bicommunal institutions has not yet led to increased or more effective activities on the ground, and the work of the technical committees remains inconsistent. In this context, the conduct of a United Nations-facilitated stock-taking exercise on the activities and modi operandi of the technical committees over the past 10 years could be useful in identifying potential areas of improvement and ways to strengthen and streamline their work.

23. I reiterate once again that the natural resources found in and around Cyprus should benefit both communities and should provide a strong incentive for all parties concerned to work in earnest towards a mutually acceptable and durable solution. Bearing in mind that all parties have recently reiterated their continued commitment to this objective, all efforts should be made to avoid unnecessary escalation in the coming months and to pursue dialogue on this issue.

24. Ms. Lute conducted careful consultations, and I am grateful for the thoughtful engagement and trust of the leaders of the two communities, the guarantor powers and others who have offered informed and constructive views on the prospects for a peaceful resolution of this issue, which has vexed the best efforts of the international community for over five decades.

25. Informed by these consultations, as well as my own discussions with the leaders of the two communities, I believe that prospects for a comprehensive settlement between the communities on the island remain alive, notwithstanding the well-known history of the efforts of the United Nations to broker peace between the communities and the remaining work that the parties must undertake to overcome the challenges that have, to date, impeded resolution. I observe clearly that continued support for a horizon of endless process without result lies behind us, not before us. I note the widespread consensus that an unchanging status quo — i.e., the lack of a resolution to the Cyprus issue — is not sustainable. I believe that all Cypriots deserve a common future that one thing alone can bring: a lasting agreement achieved within a clear horizon.

26. Throughout these years, the international community has demonstrated its willingness to assist the parties in their efforts to resolve long-standing antagonisms in ways that offer prospects for a better future. The message of this Organization has been consistent: while the United Nations can assist the parties, an enduring solution to the Cyprus issue is for the Cypriots to decide. The view among many informed

observers is that a solution will measurably improve the future circumstances of every Cypriot. While a settlement will demand that each side accept less than the fullest measure of satisfaction, it will also open up opportunities for growth, prosperity and confidence going forward.

27. I note that the parties recall the framework of six points that I offered last June. I also acknowledge that new ideas may additionally be needed in order for a fresh effort to bear fruit. In addition, I hold the strong conviction that the way ahead must be well prepared, with a sense of urgency and focus to seize the willingness of the two sides to negotiate. In view of what I understand to be the sides' interest to engage in such an effort, and before formal negotiations should be launched, I will instruct Ms. Lute to continue discussions to gauge the true extent of convergence on key issues and the willingness of the sides to incorporate novel proposals as part of an overall solution towards a common future that they themselves can envisage. Prior to resuming full-fledged negotiations, the sides should agree on terms of reference that would constitute the consensus starting point for a possible negotiated conclusion to the Cyprus issue.

28. I urge the parties to mobilize their creativity and commitment to help their communities understand and support the aim of a durable solution. In this regard, I believe deeply in the vitality, energy and strength of the island's population, including, especially, its women and youth, and I urge their greater engagement to help build the necessary confidence to take the steps that such a solution will require. It is my hope that these discussions can lead, once again, to the deployment of the full weight of my good offices in what may prove a lasting resolution of the Cyprus issue.

29. In conclusion, I wish to thank my Deputy Special Adviser and the personnel serving in my good offices mission in Cyprus for the dedication and commitment with which they have discharged the responsibilities entrusted to them by the Security Council. I also wish to express my appreciation for the timely and efficient way in which Ms. Lute carried out the consultations entrusted to her.